# Voices from the Field:
## Michigan's Early Care and Education Workforce

# 2018

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# Table of Contents

# Overview

## Introduction

Early childhood marks a significant period of learning, growth, and development in the lives of young children. The experiences and relationships that young children have in their early years are critical to their language, social-emotional, moral, and physical development (NRC, 2009). Early educators make up an important part of this early experience (IMO & NRC, 2012). Indeed, the knowledge and skills of early educators, and the relationships that they form with young children in early childhood have been linked to the quality of children's early friendships, to how children orient to future teachers and schooling, and to children's school readiness skills, as well as later academic achievement (Howes & Ritchie, 2002).

Despite the integral role that early educators play in the development of young children, the early care and education (ECE) workforce faces significant challenges. Insufficient compensation, long work hours, increasing job demands, having little or no planning time, and lack of preparation are only some of the challenges they face (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). As a field, few policies have been implemented systematically to support the workforce, resulting in an early learning system that remains largely ineffective, inefficient, and inequitable in preparing, supporting, and rewarding early educators (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018).

Recognizing the need to support the ECE workforce, the Michigan Department of Education / Office of Great Start (MDE/OGS) commissioned the Butler Institute for Families ("Butler"), NORC, and the University of Colorado Denver to conduct a study of the strengths, gaps, and unmet needs in Michigan's ECE workforce. The current report is designed to be a companion to a larger report that presents results of a statewide survey examining the qualifications, professional development needs, employment conditions, and well-being of Michigan's ECE workforce across job roles, job settings, geographic locations, and age groups. The current report documents the results of in-depth interviews with a sample of early educators drawn from respondents from the larger workforce survey to obtain a more nuanced view of the work lives of early educators in Michigan.

# Research Questions

This study examines the following research questions:

1. What motivates early educators to stay in their jobs or in the field?

2. What major challenges do early educators experience in their jobs?

3. What supports do early educators need to be effective in their jobs?

4. What barriers do early educators experience in accessing professional development?

# Measures

### Interview Procedures

To address these research questions, we used a semi-structured interview protocol to capture in-depth qualitative information about the work experiences and professional needs of a sample of early educators in Michigan. Content areas explored in the interviews are summarized in the accompanying text box and were designed to tap into similar content areas explored in the larger statewide survey of Michigan's ECE workforce.

## Data Collection

To populate the sample for this study, we drew from respondents who completed the statewide Michigan Early Care and Education Workforce Survey. On the survey, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Approximately 427 early educators, out of 685 who completed the survey, indicated an interest in participating in an interview. The research team then used stratified random sampling to select 20 potential interviewees across job roles that included: center and school-based administrators, teachers, assistant teachers and floaters, and family child care providers. In total, 19 interviews were conducted. Appendix B describes interviewees'

> ### Early Childhood Education Interview Content
>
> 〉 Pathway in ECE Workforce
> 〉 Education
> 〉 Professional Development
> 〉 Supervision
> 〉 Challenges and Rewards of the ECE Field
> 〉 Job Motivation
> 〉 Professional Goals

background characteristics, including their job roles and work settings, education levels, and tenure in their jobs. Interviews took place via telephone or via Zoom video-conference. Interviews were audio recorded with permission and lasted approximately 30–45 minutes each. Respondents were provided a $25 Amazon gift card for their participation.

# Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed and researchers analyzed the content of transcriptions using Atlas.ti™. The research team began by conducting line-by-line coding of interview transcripts using a combination of *a priori* codes drawn from the literature and additional codes that emerged from interviews. Multiple members of the research team conducted the first-cycle coding simultaneously. We then redistributed the interview transcripts among the research team for second-cycle coding to ensure consistency in codes. Following the line-by-line coding, researchers grouped the codes together into larger thematic categories and summarized the findings.

This report presents findings from themes derived from interviews. The report has been designed to emphasize the voices of early educators who participated in interviews. The report concludes with policy recommendations aimed at supporting the professional needs of the ECE workforce in Michigan.

# Chapter 1

# "Why I Do What I Do": Exploring Job Motivations and Challenges Among Early Educators

Nationally and in Michigan, concerns have been raised about the stability of the early educator workforce. Each year, nearly 25–40% leave their jobs (Whitebook, et al., 2014). Consequently, understanding early educators' motivations to stay in their jobs, as well as their major sources of job frustration, are key to developing systematic polices that enhance the work lives of early educators, and enable them to remain in the field. The following chapter describes major sources of inspiration that motivate early educators to remain in their jobs, and persistent job frustrations that create challenges to remaining.

## Job Motivations

Whether working in centers or in family child care homes, interviews revealed that early educators love their jobs and want to remain in the field. When asked how long they planned to stay, commonly respondents answered, "until I retire." Early educators referred to the children, the families, the difference that ECE can make in the lives of children and families, and, for some, their work environments as motivating factors.

### Working with Children and Making A Difference

Across job roles and work settings, interviewees described an inclination to love, care for, and find satisfaction in relationships with children as a major factor to both the decision to enter the profession, as well as the decision to remain in their jobs. As one early educator commented: "I like having those smiling faces, you know, all day, and I just love little ones." Others noted:
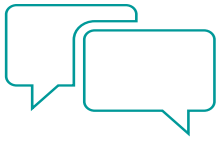
You know what, it's the nurturing and the love. I think I'm addicted to it. It's just a huge blessing to have so many little ones look up to you.

*Megan, family child care director*

It's the relationships; it's the relationships with the children and the parents, knowing that I'm filling their bucket each and every day and they're filling mine. . . I am that person because they're choosing to either go to school or work and I'm choosing to do this so we can have a relationship. And when I see these wonderful kids leave me and still want to keep coming back and visiting me—my summer hire was a 15-year-old that I had when she was a toddler—I mean you're just so blessed that people just keep coming back.

*Meredith, family child care provider*

The excitement described above extended into the daily experiences of early educators as they talked extensively and told stories of rewarding moments, watching children arrive at new understandings, and the meaningful relationships they shared with children. In particular, teachers also noted the importance of making a difference in the trajectories of young children. They often mentioned the satisfaction they took knowing their role was important to preparing children for school success and how these initial interactions they have with children would influence children's growth and development over the long term.

## *Working with Families and Feeling Appreciated*

Many early educators, especially family child care providers, also expressed a strong passion to build relationships with families. They noted pride in the impact that their work has on families and took inspiration from the appreciation that they feel from families. Carla, a center-based teacher, stated: "I love the connections and the relationships that we all, as our classroom team, make with the children and the families." Sallie, a family child care provider, summed up her feelings with: "Well, it's nice to know that the families appreciate you, because it's not an easy job. Or if the kids, they'll say something at home to their parents and the parents come back and tell you, 'They said this about Miss Sallie's house.' That's just always nice to hear, you know."

Several early educators also expressed pride in the extended relationships with families they have fostered. They reflected on how important it is to them when teenagers or college students who were formerly in their care come back and help or when they maintain some type of connection. These longer-term impacts and relationships brought a deep sense of satisfaction and motivation to "do what they do."

Above and beyond feeling appreciated by families, early educators also expressed the pride in the trust that families place in them and felt that they should honor that trust by creating environments where children thrive. They frequently reinforced the notion that trusting

relationships are necessary for all involved in the care of children. Meredith, a family child care provider, states,

> I am someone who is passionate about quality environments for infant through age five, and I open up my home to provide a quality educational environment to support all families, and to provide a good early childhood experience for those in my program. . . . I do Teaching Strategies GOLD, so I do it on all the assessments, I do the Ages and Stages screening. . . . I do them because I know it's the right thing to do and because I have stepped my program up to be top-notch quality. So, I want to do these things because centers are doing these things, so why shouldn't family child care be doing these?

## *Flexibility*

Some early educators interviewed indicated that job flexibility was also an important motivating factor to remaining in their jobs. However, the degree to which early educators experienced job flexibility varied and differences in the types of job flexibility that they experienced varied by ECE setting and job role.

For instance, family child care providers consistently remarked that operating a business in their own home allowed them to care for their own children and also reduced their own child care expenses. They enjoyed working from home, but did comment that their flexibility did not always extend to holidays, when they often had to work, since many children needed care when schools and centers were closed.

Some early educators in center and school-based settings, on the other hand, appreciated the flexibility they had around holidays. Those who worked on public school schedules also appreciated having shorter work days. Shorter work days and longer holiday breaks meant that, for some early educators, they could meet family obligations easier since their schedules aligned with their school-age children's. For other early educators, holiday breaks and shorter work days meant that they could have a second job.

It is, however, important to note that not all teachers in center and school-based settings work shorter hours or have paid holidays. Those who work in full-day, full-year programs do not experience work flexibility as a key benefit to their jobs. Results then point to the potential importance of traditional teacher work schedules as a benefit and factor in retaining teachers.

# ECE Workforce Challenges

Interviews also revealed a number of job challenges that early educators face. Some job challenges were common across job roles, including lack of professional recognition, balancing multiple job roles, and poor compensation. Other job struggles, such as long work hours and regulatory requirements, were more commonly expressed among administrators and family

child care providers, while feelings of isolation emerged as a specific job struggle for family child care providers.

## Lack of Professional Recognition

Across job roles, a feeling of lack of respect for the professional nature of their jobs was a common theme and job frustration. Carla, a lead teacher in a Great Start Readiness Program, paused when asked what was most frustrating about her job and then responded, "the lack of recognition as an educator. I mean, I don't know—that's very frustrating to me." Many early educators used the term "babysitter" to refer to the public perception about their work. Kristina, who is the director of a center-based program and has a master's in early childhood, wrestled with this perception and the impact she felt it had on the workforce. In her own words, she stated:
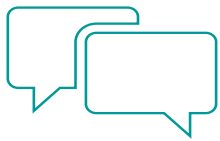
> So it kind of puts your walls up a little bit. . . . There are so many people who still say it's day care. "You're just babysitting." And that really, for somebody who's struggling and really trying to make ends meet and trying to go to school to be a better teacher for the children, I feel like the weight and the disrespect that that creates is not understood enough—if that makes sense.

Yet while early educators acknowledged the public perception of their roles as "not a profession," they also actively resisted this characterization of their jobs and viewed themselves and their roles as highly professional, emphasizing the importance of what they do for the development of children. Christine, a family child care provider who possesses a Child Development Associate (CDA) certification and has been an early educator for 30 years, commented: "I mean, people think that this isn't a real job, but I teach preschool in my job, so it is a real job." Diana, another family child care provider, stated: "I try to do like a preschool environment, and things that preschool teachers do." These comments from early educators in Michigan reflect their view that their roles are central to early childhood development and as valuable as any other profession.

The public perception that early educators do not need to be skilled (Whitebook et al., 2014) or are babysitters was also particularly frustrating to the sample because many had pursued extensive professional preparation and demonstrated professional commitment to the field. As a sample, they averaged 17 years in the profession, and 13 had more than 10 years of service in their jobs. Many of them also came to their jobs with professional preparation or sought it out while in their jobs, with 17 holding associate's, bachelor's, or master's degrees, and the two un-degreed early educators' holding a CDA. Interviewees indicated that they felt a profound necessity to pursue higher learning not only to be effective with children, but to combat the misperceptions of the nature of their jobs. Family child care providers felt it especially necessary to be educated so that they could effectively communicate with families about their children. As the interviewer probed about the impact of education, Brenda, a family child care provider, responded in the following way:

INTERVIEWER | Do you feel that families respond differently to you based on your education?

PARTICIPANT │ I think so. Not because I have a degree on my wall, but because I can talk to them with some intelligence or knowledge rather than from my heart so much. I understand what's happening usually. I know where to send them if I don't, and they usually will respond to my instruction—not so much instruction but "Look at the lines that your two-year-old is making" or "Look at the circles they're making," because to them it's just scribbles on a paper, but to me, I'm seeing the development coming to where they're growing. So it does make it a little more interesting for them, I think. Or "This behavior is typical of their age, so don't worry about it. I mean, we're working with it, but the behavior is nothing to worry about because it's something that all typical three-year-olds do."

Indeed, many early educators in this study recognize that in order to establish a change in perception about their roles, they in turn need to display competence and professionalism and provide a high-quality learning environment for young children. Nonetheless, this long-standing perception of early educators as "babysitters," in spite of their professionalism, continues and sometimes proves challenging for early educators to maintain motivation to remain in the field.

## Balancing Multiple Job Responsibilities

Given the nature of funding for ECE in the United States, most ECE programs report being underfunded, resulting in low wages for early educators and prompting high staff turnover and pervasive understaffing within programs (Whitebook et al., 2014). Consequently, many early educators in this sample noted that they often are called upon to wear multiple hats and balance multiple job roles, which emerged as another source of job frustration among many early educators in the sample, especially center-based directors.

"I would describe my job . . . I would say that I am the reason the center runs, I guess. I do all of the billing, all of the payments, all of the staffing matters, just about everything. I do a lot. I do a lot." These words were the sentiments of most center-based directors in the study. Directors felt pulled in many directions and felt that they could not always direct their attention to any single function effectively. Due to budget constraints, directors were often not able to hire additional support to help them balance these different tasks. As such, they also complained of long work hours, needing time to decompress, and burnout.

Balancing multiple job roles was not, however, restricted to just center directors. Floaters also conveyed that they wear multiple hats. By nature of their jobs, floaters are given varying tasks throughout the day and move from one location to the next to complete these tasks. "I am a teacher. But I'm also like a substitute, so I cover team meetings and I cover when people are out. But I also help—I do the lunches for the children, and then . . . I assist in the food ordering and the supplies of the food, and when there's activities, I do stories for the kids."

Family child care providers also spoke of the challenges of balancing multiple responsibilities. Typically as the sole adult in the program, family child care providers have to perform all the tasks in their program, from administration to teaching, to cleaning, and much more. They talked about how strategic they had to be with their time. Many family child care providers also reported that the administrative aspects of their job, such as recordkeeping and organization, many times did not receive the attention it needed.

## Poor Compensation and Benefits

Poor compensation, including wages and benefits, is another major job challenge expressed by many respondents. Poor compensation, they feel, is also another indication of the lack of respect society has for the ECE profession. Christine, a family child care provider, expressed this contradiction: "every Sunday when I watch football and I see how much money these guys make, and then I look at our teachers, I think, 'There is something seriously wrong with our society if we're paying these guys that much money and our teachers are not even making enough to eat and live.'"

For family child care providers, the expenses inherent to running a child care business combined with the long hours they are open, frequently resulted in them making below minimum wage. They also talked about the financial strain associated with taking time off, as this would mean unpaid days and, therefore, a decrease in income. Additionally, family child care providers lacked access to other needed benefits. They commented that savings were minimal or non-existent for retirement because they were making the bare minimum in their profession to take care of their families. The only option that they saw for increasing their compensation was raising their fees. Yet many expressed deep concern about doing this, as they are likely to lose families. Meredith, a family child care provider, stated:

> I mean I can charge whatever I want, but I might lose some families. Am I getting paid what I think I'm worth, having a master's degree and now having to pay for that master's degree out of what I'm making? No, it probably wasn't a good decision; it was a lot of money. I mean I'm going to be paying on that for the rest of my life. But it was a decision that I made because I thought that it was important for me.

Early educators working in center and school-based settings also expressed frustration about poor wages. Teachers and assistant teachers expressed frustration over the minimal benefits packages they receive. They commented that offering health insurance alone was simply not enough. They noted a need for dental, vision, and retirement packages, and that, for many early educators interviewed, their employers did not currently offer these benefits.

Many also expressed frustration that obtaining certifications or pursuing additional education did not seem to positively impact their compensation. Of the nineteen participants in the qualitative study, only four teachers who worked in center and school-based settings reported that their wages were minimally increased as a result of obtaining higher levels of education. Not having time off for trainings or to pursue higher education was another point of frustration for many early educators. Teachers in center-based programs frequently complained that they were often required to complete additional training or education for the job, but did not receive the support they needed to do so successfully.

> I either have to use my own personal time or unpaid leave to leave during the day to drive. I commute an hour to go to class, and then an hour back home after four hours at Winter College [pseudonym]. So, I mean, if I take four hours off of work to

go to school, I'm taking that pay out of my check to support my family. . . . And I have to use grants and loans to go to school. I don't get, like, reimbursed or anything. So I'm going to have a bunch of student loans, you know, for a requirement for my job and not that much of a raise to go with it.

*Trisha, center-based assistant teacher*

## *Regulatory Requirements and Multiple Standards*

Center administrators and family child care providers, in particular, expressed frustrations over both the number of regulatory standards, particularly around credentialing, and the multiple, and sometimes conflicting, standards and requirements that they have to navigate to operate their programs.

For example, one participant shared her frustration with the need to have a specific child development degree if she was working in GSRP or Head Start. She noted that her bachelor's was not in early education, but she had "a lot of child development coursework." She expressed frustration that she needed more education even with a master's degree and many years of working in the field to meet teacher qualification standards that was specific to particular early learning service sectors but was not relevant to working in other early learning sectors.

Others noted multiple regulatory requirements and standards that they needed to navigate to operate their programs as a source of frustration. A number of these early educators expressed deep concern that there were too many regulations with child care licensing, and that they often conflicted with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards, fire codes, or other operating standards. In some cases, early educators feared lawsuits. Administrators and family child care providers also mentioned how difficult it is to navigate separate regulations required by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) for centers and for home-based care, which made it difficult to understand requirements as early educators moved jobs between work settings. They also mentioned a lack of communication among state agencies about rules and regulations that often created either lack of awareness or confusion about new rules and regulations and that they often found out about new regulations once they learned that they did "something wrong."

Regulatory requirements also appeared to present significant costs to early educators that caused frustration, particularly among family child care providers. For example, several family child care providers mentioned that they are required to have an emergency person to serve as back-up personnel when needed. They expressed frustration that while they may only use this person once or twice a year, the emergency person needs to meet several requirements. Diana summed up her frustrations in these words:

> If I have an emergency in my house during daycare hours, and I have to call my emergency person . . . because I have to leave them alone with the children for the emergency, they now have to be fingerprinted, take . . . five hours of classes, training, CPR, and first aid also. TB test, doctor medical clearance, I mean, it would
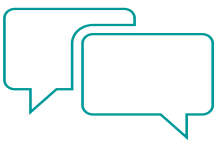
cost them hundreds of dollars just to be my emergency person, and that's per year.

Family child care providers were then left debating how to meet the cost for these emergency personnel. Rather than paying what they considered exorbitant fees to meet these regulations, many family child care providers noted that they opted to close during emergencies and place the burden on families to figure out child care.

## Long Work Hours

While almost all participants spoke of long work hours as a significant source of job stress, this phenomenon appeared most pronounced for family child care providers. In particular, family child providers in this sample worked a median of 52 hours each week, often with little or no help. In addition, family child care providers are often the ECE arrangement of choice for families that work non-traditional schedules (Capizzano, Adams, & Sonenstein, 2000), as they are more likely to accommodate these schedules than are center and school-based centers. As such, drop off at family child care providers can be as early as 6:00 a.m. and pick-up as late as 6:00 p.m. (or later). As business owners, they are also often the only adult in their program, and all functions of the program, such as meal planning and preparation, daily maintenance, curriculum preparation, program administration, and cleaning, have to occur after child care hours, making for long days.

Meredith, a family child care provider, explained the following when asked what was most frustrating about her job: "I would have to say the hours that I put in . . . the problem is that . . . I get kids as early as 6:20 in the morning all the way until, today was a little late due to traffic, a quarter to six at night."

Romaine, another family child care provider, lamented that the work weeks were long and her days were a typical ten-hour shift or more, "it's a long day. . . . I work 60 hours a week but I have no support from the world."

## A Lonely Process

The fact that so many early educators work long hours often resulted in feelings of isolation, especially among many family child care providers in the sample. This feeling of isolation was evident in Meredith's response as she stated: "I'm very isolated being a family child care provider," and Kerstin, who agreed, "I'm a home daycare, so that has been the worst probably of—the worst part of working in your home is you're isolated. You're very isolated."

Family child care providers often expressed the need to find community with their peers. While some family child care providers expressed the desire to network with early educators in different types of programs, others wanted the opportunity to find family child care providers in similar settings who could understand their unique experiences.

Well I like to hang around with other professional people who think and operate like myself. . . . My day is a 12-hour day and so . . . I do . . . child care-related activities all

day long. If I take a break, I might put my feet up and grab a cup of tea if everybody is sleeping, but it leaves very little time for socialization [or building] relationships with other people. Unless you go to the area conferences all the time . . . then you're meeting up with people from all different walks of life. It's perfectly fine to talk with someone who's a center staff person, but she may not understand what I'm going through, and I might not exactly understand what she's going through.

*Meredith, family child care provider*

## Voices of the Michigan Early Care and Education Workforce

I really love this job, I think it would be more about how . . . to have extra support with knowledge and with finances, you know, how teachers at school get vacations and sick days and why can't something like that be offered to us.

*Romaine, owner of a family child care*

I guess one of the things is like with home daycare, you're limited to yourself and who you see every day. I think it'd be really neat to have more opportunities to network with other home providers. Because there's not really anything like that in my community.

*Myra, family child care provider*

I think the most rewarding thing for me . . . [is] seeing the achievements the children make and being able to help them be ready for the public school system or whatever else they have after preschool.

*Trisha, center-based assistant teacher*

I enjoy my staff. I just enjoy what I do. I love to watch those kids learn every year. My supervisor and I have a young fives class, and many of those kids learn how to read when they are with us, so it is just awesome to see them learn, so that definitely motivates me to stay.

*Anna, center-based assistant teacher*

The hours, they're long . . . and the pay is—we don't get retirement, we don't get paid sick leave, we don't—other than the rating system telling me I'm doing a good job, you don't have someone coming in and saying, "Hey, because you did this, we're going to do this for you."

*Kerstin, family child care provider*

# Chapter 2

# "We Need Scaffolds:" Exploring Sources of Job Supports in the Michigan Early Care and Education Workforce

Given the complexity and demands of the job, it is critically important to understand the sources of support that early educators want and need so they can provide high-quality early care and education and remain in the field. The following chapter explores the specific job supports that the sample of early educators in Michigan identified as most helpful to ensuring their effectiveness and well-being.

## Collaboration and Supervision

Early educators in center-based settings frequently talked about the importance of collegiality among staff as an important source of job support. Often, these collegial relationships resulted in informal learning communities among staff in centers. For instance, many teachers noted that while regular communication among teachers was not necessarily structured, it happened on a daily basis, especially between lead teachers and assistant teachers or floaters. These daily conversations created opportunities to bounce ideas or receive feedback that both supported and facilitated learning and growth.

> So it would mean just bouncing ideas off of each other, kind of brainstorming to see what we could improve on in the classroom, and then above that, there's an administrative supervisor. If we're having a problem with other staff and such, we go to them for support, or having trouble with hours worked or stuff like that. Kind of just to sit down and meet and go over what we could do to improve the whole environment.

*Trisha, center-based assistant teacher*

The quote above also reflects the importance of supervisors in the work lives of early educators, which was expressed by a number of teachers in the study. Often teachers expressed the importance of having a supervisor with open lines of communication, who offered instructional support and who fostered a learning community among teachers, as a significant source of job support. Many teachers appreciated that their supervisors were responsive and provided useful feedback when needed. Additionally, many found it valuable when supervisors attended the same professional development trainings as teachers, as supervisors were then able to collaborate and implement ideas or best practices from the trainings together as a team to further foster a professional learning community. By participating in professional development with teachers, supervisors were also then able to provide clarity on professional development topics to deepen learning.

For many center and school-based early educators, their supervisors played a significant role in creating a collaborative culture to foster their effectiveness and retention. However, not all early educators in this sample felt that they had access to a supportive supervision. For those who did not have access to supervisors and an open line of communication with them, they often expressed struggles and dissatisfaction in their jobs. For example, Kristina, a center-based director, struggled with the type of supervision and feedback that she needed to support her work within the context of the K–12 educational system. Often, she felt somewhat isolated as the only ECE administrator in the district. As such, she did not feel as though she could communicate with other administrators and gain deeper support in her job role since her function as an early education administrator was unique. She stated:

> As far as support for myself, I think just having, just literally having a sounding board and that collaboration, because in the position that I'm in, I'm the only one in early childhood. So I feel like if I go talk with the other administrators in the district, they don't understand the capacities and all the different programs that we have in early childhood. . . . I take their feedback, but I feel like they don't see the [vision] that I have for young children.

Learning communities appear to be a significant source of job support for family child care providers, as well, and are often developed organically. Indeed, some family child care providers in this study sought out other colleagues to form relationships with them. In some instances, these providers created support groups that met monthly to share concerns and best practices. Social media, such as Facebook, also served as an avenue for these types of relationships to form. Additionally, family child care providers recognized the need to offer their experiences and expertise. As a result, they volunteered as mentors and coaches to early educators entering the profession.

## Coaching and Mentoring

A key job support identified among most early educators interviewed was having some sort of coaching and mentoring relationship. For some, this occurred within the context of their

relationships with their supervisors. For others, it took place in the context of coaching with classroom teams, while for others still it took place in a one-on-one mentoring relationship from an outside consultant. Kristina, a center-based director explained: "But then looking at coaching . . . we've used the coaching method for our Great Start Readiness Preschool with the Early Childhood specialists and that's been pretty effective as long as a strong relationship has been built." Ultimately whether provided in-house by a supervisor, or from an outside source, coaching and mentoring were viewed as critical to early educators' growth, learning, and retention. Early educators talked specifically about the importance of the collaboration with coaches and mentors and the opportunity it provided to reflect and revisit their instructional practices with their coaches and mentors.

Most teachers in center and school-based settings also mentioned that they have access to, and regular coaching from, educational specialists, supervisors, and or regional partnerships. But for some teachers, it is not a clearly defined or established process. Coaching between supervisors and teachers in centers were often more organic than formalized. Even though teachers felt like they had regular communication or had a good relationship with supervisors, meetings were not necessarily structured or consistent. Only a single teacher reported that she received reflective supervision from her supervisor. She explained this as a process where she met on a regular basis with her supervisor to analyze her teaching practice and identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement. She further commented that this practice was necessary for her to grow and shift in values, but it also kept her grounded in her profession as an early educator.

For family child care providers, the coaching and mentoring they received from a Quality Improvement Consultant through Great Start to Quality was identified as an important job support and provided them with guidance on best practices. They felt that the resources and access to qualified staff at Great Start to Quality provided tremendous support for them on a regular basis.

## Funding and Resources

In addition to supervision, coaching, and mentoring supports, many early educators in the sample also identified the availability of instructional and quality improvement resources and funding as critical to their individual and organizational growth and to their feelings of being treated like a professional. Within larger school and center-based settings that tended to be publicly funded, early educators spoke about the availability of professional development opportunity scholarships, and quality improvement grants from programs like GSRP or Head Start, as integral to being able to do their jobs well. Nonetheless, family child care providers and early educators in small non-publicly funded programs also noted a lack of access to these resources and a related need for greater funding opportunities to be able to provide the types of professional supports that early educators need to be effective and stay in their jobs and that are expected in professionalized job roles. This section explores some of the existing and needed supports that early educators identified as important to their continued growth and retention within the field.

## Resource Disparities

Early educators across settings identified support for quality improvement, through mechanisms such as the Great Start for Quality program or the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship, as necessary resources for ensuring high quality care and instruction. They noted that the grants, coaching, training, and education that are tied to these types of resources can help take their programs to the next level of quality. However, when these resources are absent, they can also be a barrier to quality improvement and individual professional advancement. Indeed, a lack of resources needed to do the job can be a source of job frustration that prompts people to leave (Schaack & Le, 2017).

For some school and center-based educators, the infrastructure and more stable funding sometimes associated with being part of a larger organization was helpful in being able to provide professional resources, such as conference registration fees or classroom substitutes to allow for participation in professional development. Said one center-based floater:
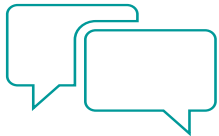
> I think we get a lot of support to further our education, where we get paid, we get reimbursed, for conferences we might go to. There's lots of online programs, or there's lots of programs through the U of M also in terms of team-building, communication, leadership. And then we also have trainings that we have in the beginning of the year, and at the end of the year, too, with our other centers. So we have somebody from outside that we pay for to do a training.

*Melinda, center-based floater*

Other early educators in the study, particularly those in smaller centers or family child care settings, shared how a lack of funding sometimes prevented them from accessing quality improvement opportunities. According to a center director based in a church setting: "There's actually one conference that I was actually looking into that has a lot of the talks . . . that I would love to go to, but, again, it's $65 a person and it's an all-day Saturday thing, which would be fine. And I don't mind going. But, again, our church is rather low on funds at the moment. So it would been out-of-pocket cost for me."

A home-based provider shared that limited funding and professional support was restricting her ability to grow the quality and scope of her business, even though that was her goal:

> I'm very confident that I'm capable of providing a good center that would be good for the community, provide what's necessary in a day care center, safety, education, all of that, but I don't have any support. I don't have any funding or any way, anyone, to open doors to be able to go further.

*Romaine, family child care provider*

Some early educators also noted that even when resources were available, they were often not ongoing. There was no guarantee that a grant or sponsorship would continue from year to year. These funding limitations were more evident in small centers and family child care, where participants discussed that they were unable to sometimes replace broken play equipment or purchase additional instructional material. These early educators shared that they exercised high levels of creativity to ensure that they were providing high quality child care in spite of the minimal resources.

## Voices of the Michigan Early Care and Education Workforce

I feel like I need to stick with building that relationship of collaboration with somebody, even if . . . it was just somebody else that was in a center that was so near us that we felt like we could collaborate and not be competitors. But as it turns out, in the way that we want children and the amount of funding that we need, you end up competing, and it needs more of a collaborative relationship than that.

*Kristina, center-based director*

We have an early childhood specialist that comes in, and he helps coach us and gives us different things when we set our goals and also workshops. We do some in-service training through our agency, so that includes all of our classrooms that are just within our agency.

*Talia, center-based teacher*

If I could change anything? I'd love to have more positive support. Most of it has been don't do, don't do, but not very much positive support.

*Kendra, center-based director*

[My supervisor is] always looking out to get us the best professional development opportunities, and the online works for me, but it doesn't necessarily work for some of my other workmates. So, the supervisor/director, she does a lot of research for all of our different personalities, and that is something that she's just really great at.

*Anna, center-based assistant teacher*

The best support system I had was when I was sponsored by Ford, and they provided us that support system with trainings and, like, stipends for toys for our daycare and rewards, things like that. Like if you reach so many hours in training, we'll give you this much to spend in your daycare.

*Kerstin, family child care provider*

The grants are awesome. The grants are amazing when they come. I got one 20 years ago when I first started, and then they just had some Race to the Top funds, and we got some grants with those, but they were 20 years apart, so more grants would be awesome.

*Diana, family child care provider*

# Chapter 3

# "These Children Need So Much More": Exploring Professional Development in the Michigan Early Care and Education Workforce

## Professional Development Opportunities and Challenges

Effective professional development is a critical support for early educators to be able to do their jobs effectively. When early educators are well prepared, they are able to meet children's and families' needs more easily, while building their own sense of self-efficacy and career pathways. In Michigan, as elsewhere in the country, there are also increasing expectations of early educators to meet certain professional qualifications that require more training and continuing education than ever before. As a result, access to professional development is critical to advancing the field and improving the career standing of the early childhood workforce. However, many early educators face barriers to accessing professional development, which is borne out in the current study. This section examines the professional development opportunities and challenges reported through interviews with this sample of the Michigan early childhood care and education workforce.

### Access to Professional Development

The early educators interviewed for this study expressed an eagerness to engage in various types of professional development. Some also communicated that professional development provided them with opportunities to learn more, while giving them space to engage in conversations with their peers. Whether the work was in schools, centers, group homes, or family child care settings, most interviewees expressed delight in the opportunity to grow in their profession. Said

one family care provider, "I'm open to any kind of training. I actually enjoy going to workshops and these kinds of trainings. I find them very interesting."

Michigan early educators described a range of different types of training and professional development that they have access to, including conferences, online trainings, in-person single- or multi-day workshops, and on-site offerings. Availability depended somewhat on job role and setting. One center director noted the broad array of offerings for teachers, but expressed a need for more opportunities focused on program administrators:

> Administration . . . and leadership in early childhood is another big topic that is definitely [needed]. And adding those in while maintaining that, "Oh, what are some fresh ideas for the sand table or what ways can you incorporate math into your daily routine" . . . I feel like those are definitely two big populations in early childhood, and we have one covered right now.

*Kristina, center-based director*

Some early educators also shared that they did not always have much choice about which professional development trainings they participated in, as certain courses were often needed to fulfill state or workplace requirements. As a result, some early educators were frustrated and sometimes resentful about the amount of participation needed in required trainings and the limited ability to make their own professional development selections.

## Support

Levels of support for professional development varied across settings and job roles among interviewees. As described in Chapter 2, many participants, especially those in larger school or center-based settings that tended to be publicly funded, had regular access to professional development offerings and robust coaching supports. This included paid time off to attend trainings, coverage from substitute teachers, and follow-up coaching to reinforce training concepts. For other participants, however, there were barriers to accessing professional development that would either help them meet licensing and quality rating requirements or that would otherwise further advance their careers.

Cost was particularly identified as a roadblock to accessing needed trainings. Many early educators shared that operating budgets were restricted, which limited the amount of funds available to support professional development. As such, some professional development activities in which they were interested, whether in-state or out-of-state, were unattainable due to cost. Kristina, the director at a center, expressed the following:

> The opportunity for conferences is amazing, but the cost of them is outrageous. Most of the time they're *not local* and the one that is aligned to our curriculum is about $500 for just registration. That's not talking travel costs or hotel rooms. And I'm looking at sending a staff of, let's see, I have 10, 9—about 20 to 21 [staff]. So I mean, there's no way our programs would ever be able to afford to attend.

Early educators whose organizations helped them access required training and allocated paid work time for them to attend that training expressed feeling supported with professional development. Some, though, reported that they had to use personal time to attend even required trainings, especially if the training occurred in the evening or over the weekend. Early educators who work in small center-based settings or who operate small group or family child care operations were especially vulnerable to these time barriers. According to Christine, a family child care provider:

> It's, again, you have to take time off of work and you don't get paid for that, unless you're confident in yourself enough or have the clientele that say, "Oh yes, please, we'll pay you to take a day off work to get trained." People don't do that.

## *Convenience*

Many early educators in the interview sample spoke about needing convenient options for accessing professional development. However, perceptions of convenience varied by job role or setting in some instances, but simply by individual learning style in others. For instance, weekday trainings were preferable and possible for some early educators who received paid training time and substitute coverage, while for others, weeknight or weekend offerings were preferable and the only possibility for their business operations. At the same time, some individuals, regardless of role or work setting, preferred online offerings, while others preferred in-person interactions and networking opportunities.

Overall, factors that this sample of Michigan early educators identified as important to consider when planning or selecting professional development opportunities included training location, timing of offerings, and delivery method. Some perceptions regarding convenience are observed in the following comments from different interview participants:

**Location.** "My only thing I wish would be that some of them were offered closer to where I live."

*Myra, family child care provider*

**Time.** "Well, I need evening, of course. And so a class would be offered an hour and 15 minutes away from here, but it starts 15 minutes after I get out of work, so there's no sense in me going, because I'm going to miss a whole hour of it. And I understand they want to get it started early, but if it's not something I can get to . . . I like to go on Saturday to an all-day training and get five hours all at once in three or four different classes to get them out of the way that way. That's a handy way for me to do it, but of course I don't want to do it over and over monthly or anything like that."

*Brenda, group home provider*

> For me? I would love to have a during-the-day sort of conference call—like what we're doing now. [That] would be fantastic. Also, online has been something that has been very beneficial for me. But, also, during the day a lot of the workshops that we have or that are available are in the afternoon or after work. . . . Also, on

the weekends, I know there's a couple that have been on the weekends. But more would be beneficial.

*Kendra, center-based director*

**Delivery method**. "I think they could get a lot of people more opportunities if it was through like webinars where you could still be at your center and watch it as a group, as a classroom theme, or if they were offered as, like, seminars that were more local and you didn't have to commute to them."

*Trisha, center-based assistant teacher*

"I like workshops and conferences . . . the best. I learn well from like listening to someone talk about it, like someone presents it to me."

*Audrey, center-based assistant teacher*

"Well, I would say anything online is really nice, especially if I can do it on my own time. Yeah, for sure that's the easiest and most beneficial to me."

*Anna, center-based assistant teacher*

## *Relevance*

Most of the participants in the study expressed a desire for professional development to be relevant to their job roles, experience levels, and settings. A number of interview participants also noted that many trainings have been driven by recent changes to licensing or quality rating standards, resulting in the offering of a lot of redundant content. The need to collect hours to report for these requirements also sometimes means that early educators are taking courses simply to check boxes, rather than to fill a genuine professional development need. This section explores the perspectives of interviewees on these issues.

**Redundance**. Early educators from the interview sample expressed concern that the trainings being offered to meet licensing and quality improvement requirements are resulting in repetitive content and increased hours of training overall.

Kristina, a center director, shared her thoughts on the repetitive nature of the material covered:

What we've noticed for teachers, and this is me speaking as an advocate for teachers, what they feel like now is they have attended a great number of different professional developments—and they can always take something away from it— but it almost seems to be the same things said over and over and over again. . . . So when they go, a lot of times they're like, "I feel like we've already heard this."

Anna, an assistant teacher, explained her frustration around the number of training hours required by the state:

I would say the most frustrating thing is simply the hours of professional development time that we need and that just continues to go up and up and up. Every year, it's more hours, and there are some really great classes out there, but then there's some that are so redundant. And we end up taking some classes simply to get our hours in, and its things we've heard before, things we know already, things we already implement, stuff like that. But it's just a matter of we need to have a certain number of hours, so we need to take classes.

**Job Roles**. Interviewees shared a need for training content that is more directly relevant to their specific job roles. Administrators, for instance, identified a gap in offerings directed at leading an organization, including topics such as staff management and budgeting. Kendra, a center-based director, noted, "I would love to have [a training] on human resources; just, how do you deal with staff and staff disagreement issues would be awesome. Also, staffing period. How do you get qualified staff? How do you keep qualified staff?" Another center director, Kristina, concurred: "From the administrative portion, there has been very few administrative professional developments for early childhood."

Teachers, meanwhile, mentioned a need for professional development that would help them with classroom management and social-emotional development. According to Audrey, an assistant teacher, she would like more content on "how to deal with and redirect behavior children. We have a lot of behavior children in our program."

**Experience Levels**. For some, professional development, especially required trainings, were often regarded as too elementary. These early educators noted that they fulfilled the required hours for professional development but did not leave inspired or satisfied with the content covered. They expressed a desire for required trainings to have leveled sections to meet the needs of less and more experienced early educators. Karen, a family child care provider shared:

My biggest thing is being in the field for so many years, a lot of the trainings and topics were the same, which over the last couple years they've been changing and making some new ones. So, it's definitely the main part of it, but just having the different trainings that are available and not always the same routine ones, coming up with new, different ideas and different things. When you have somebody that's been in the field for so long, sometimes it gets repetitive.

**Setting**. By setting, some family care providers, in particular, were frustrated that many trainings didn't have content related to their setting, but related, instead, to center-based care and schools. Some identified specific content that would be relevant to their unique and multi-faceted roles:
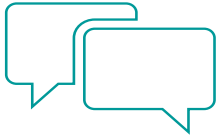
I [need] ways that I can do my recordkeeping easier. I struggle with doing . . . screenings with the kids because I struggle with doing it on the run, if you know what I'm saying. They say to keep notes and write down things that they're doing, but I have a hard time doing that because there's only one or two of us in the room, and they're all three and under at this time, so I just feel like I'm taking away from the kids when I'm doing that kind of stuff.

*Brenda, group home provider*

Within school and center-based settings, early educators in the interview sample identified opportunities to focus on content that reflected the population of children and families that they served. Talia, a center-based teacher, shared her recent experience with training focused on their service population:

We've been doing a lot of stuff with toxic stress and how that affects the brain development and understand the kids that we deal with, because most of them are at poverty level or 250 percent baseline. And knowing these kids, a lot of the behaviors and stuff that we see, that does impact them. And [so we are] getting the training on that and what we can do to help them.

## Voices of the Michigan Early Care and Education Workforce

I'd love [a training] on . . . how to help parents through the system of starting in a child care center and graduating through with their children.

*Kendra, center-based director*

I would love organization training. I just have so much stuff for the kids, and I just keep getting more and more, and I just don't know how to organize it good to where it's the most use.

*Diana, family child care provider*

I'd say [we need trainings] that are more local. Like, if there's a drug problem in a community, if there was trainings on how to detect that and how to help the children that are coming into class while . . . their parents are in trouble with drugs or money or whatever it may be.

*Trisha, center-based assistant teacher*

I just think that the minute that I stop learning is the time that it is time for me to get out of this field because the evolution of child care is constantly changing; the way parents are parenting is constantly changing, what these children are exposed to is constantly changing. And if we don't change with it, if I were to just use what I did solely with maybe my own children, not to say that that was right or wrong, but it was so narrow-minded, these children need so much more and we need to provide these rich experiences.

*Meredith, family child care provider*

I have not seen any training available for home daycare whatsoever on teaching strategy. I've seen workshops on how to use assessment in planning curriculum, that's pretty basic. I can do that, but get more in depth with it. I would even like to be part of a classroom who actually uses that teaching strategies and implements it in their classroom. I haven't really seen that out there.

*Kerstin, family child care provider*

# Chapter 4

# Recommendations

Importantly, early educators in this sample expressed a deep commitment to young children, their families, and the field, as well as a commitment to their ongoing professional growth and learning. Nonetheless, the current early learning system in the United States and in Michigan presents financial and professional challenges to the workforce in spite of many early educators' deep commitments, prompting many to leave their jobs each year. Thus, the following policy recommendations focus on ways in which to support the early childhood workforce in Michigan to foster greater retention and professional well-being, and are drawn from the voices from the early educators in this study.

## *Conducting a Standards Alignment Scan*

A key finding in this study is that center administrators and family child care providers appear confused with the many and sometimes conflicting program/quality standards guiding ECE program operation across ECE funding sources and setting types. In an effort to build a cohesive early learning system in Michigan, one important starting point might be to conduct a systems scan of standards, and then horizontally align standards across ECE funding sources and vertically align program standards with early learning and professional development standards. These efforts could serve to foster system cohesion and consistency, while improving efficiencies for programs and reducing early educator frustration with conflicting standards.

## *Piloting a Shared Services Model*

Another key finding in this study is that center administrators and family child care providers also frequently feel overwhelmed and frustrated by the multiple roles that they have to play in their jobs, given that many centers are short-staffed and that family child care providers are often the only adult in the program. They often complained that administrative duties suffered as a result of having to balance multiple job duties. One potential solution that Michigan might consider is piloting a shared services model in some communities. Shared services is a community-based

partnership in which ECE programs share administrative costs, such as accounting, ordering, and human resources management, to deliver services in a more streamlined, efficient, and cost effective manner while reducing the administrative burden on instructional leaders, especially in smaller programs.

## Developing Online Professional Development Modules Tailored to Expertise Levels

Early educators in this study, and in the larger statewide survey of early educators in Michigan, also report experiencing numerous barriers to in-service professional development. Common barriers included expense, lack of paid time off, and lack of substitute coverage to attend professional development. One strategy that other states implemented to address these barriers is to develop a set of online professional development modules tied to early learning and QRIS standards embedded within their registries that early educators have access to at their convenience and for no or nominal costs. Completion of modules can then be tied to their MIRegistry tier level, and in some states, these tiers are tied to bonuses. Early educators in this study also suggest the importance of developing these models with the range of early educator experiences and settings in mind; such that modules are available for novice through master-educator levels and tailored to different ECE settings (e.g., home-based and center-based) and provide meaningful learning experiences.

## Developing a Substitute Pool

Early educators in this study also appreciated face-to-face professional development opportunities but were often challenged to be able to take time off because of lack of substitute coverage. Local Great Start Collaboratives might consider funding a shared services substitute pool that ECE programs in their communities could access so that staff could attend professional development during the workday. These substitute pools would help to ensure programs do not have to shoulder the double financial burden of paying staff and a substitute. Programs might consider collectively investing some quality improvement dollars into the pool to have access to it and to help sustain it.

## Investing in Developing Strong Leaders

Another key finding from this study is that the instructional leadership in ECE centers and school-based programs appears to play an important role in setting the climate of a program, fostering teacher learning communities and collaboration, and facilitating staff retention. Michigan might consider small grants to institutions of higher education to develop ECE leadership tracks within their teacher preparation programs. The state might also consider developing a sequence of in-service professional development opportunities recognized in the MIRegistry focused on instructional leadership and program administration, and developing leadership apprenticeship programs to build a pipeline of effective leaders.

## *Investing in Family Child Care Provider Networks*

Many family child care providers in this study also appear to seek out opportunities for professional learning and support, but also complain of the isolation and loneliness associated with the job. One potentially promising strategy for supporting home-based providers' program quality and for fostering professional affiliations that a local Great Start Collaborative might fund are staffed family child care provider networks (Bromer , Van Haitsma, Daley, & Mondgliani, 2008). Staffed networks employ a highly qualified staff person who coordinates and delivers support services to home-based providers and facilitates group meetings, networking, professional collaboration, and learning opportunities.

## *Coalition Building to Advocate for Better Compensation*

Perhaps the greatest job frustration across early educators and a barrier to advancing the field is the pervasively poor compensation experienced by most early educators. In fact, a staggering 93% of the sample of early educators in Michigan who responded to the statewide survey indicated that they receive some form of public assistance reserved for low-income families or individuals to be able to make ends meet (Roberts, Le, Schaack, Franko, & Morgan, 2018). One potential mechanism for increasing wages that may be explored is pay parity with K–12 for Great Start Readiness teachers, another may be increasing Child Care and Development Block Grant funded subsidy reimbursement rates and earmarking increases for salaries, and a third mechanism might be non-refundable tax credits that are tied to an early educators' MIRegistry tier.

In Michigan, changes in funding formulas, by and large, are decided by the administration and legislature. Consequently, leadership is needed in Michigan to prioritize early educator wages in advocacy efforts and to pinpoint a specific policy solution in which the advocacy community can agree. In reality, multiple policy solutions should be explored and prioritized over time, as different ECE service sectors require different solutions. Thus, dedicated leadership is needed to create a common vision for the multitude of advocates in Michigan, to deploy advocates strategically, and to identify the specific policy opportunities that may currently exist. Prioritizing building a coalition, selecting an entity to lead the coalition, fostering consensus within the field, and prioritizing a strategy are foundational first steps.

# Conclusion

Over the past several decades, ECE has received unprecedented policy attention due, in part, to positive associations between high-quality ECE and children's school readiness (Yoshikawa, Weiland, Brooks-Gunn, Burchinal, Espinoza, Gormley, et al., 2013). Increasingly, however, policy makers are also recognizing that if ECE is to live up to its promises of preparing children for elementary school and beyond, it is critical to elevate the profession, including the policies and infrastructure that support the professional preparation and ongoing professional learning opportunities available to early educators, as well as the compensation and working conditions of the professionals in the field. This study provided a glimpse into the work lives of a sample of early educators in Michigan. It points to several key areas in the early learning system that Michigan policy makers and early childhood leaders may target to enhance the work lives of the adults who educate and care for Michigan's youngest children and to foster their effective teaching, well-being, and retention in the field.

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# Appendix A

## Key Terms

**Administrator:** a staff person in a community-based or publicly funded program who is in charge of administrative tasks. Administrators include directors, assistant directors, and public school administrators.

**Assistant Director:** a staff person within a licensed program who supports the administration of the program and is supervised by a director.

**Assistant Teacher:** a staff person who works in a community-based or publicly funded program who assists with classroom activities but is not the lead teacher. Assistant teachers are often referred to as teacher aides, staff aides, or paraprofessionals. For the purposes of this study, floater teachers and substitutes are also included as assistant teachers. Floater teachers and substitutes are staff who are not assigned to a particular classroom but move classroom to classroom to support classroom activities or to provide substitute coverage.

**Community-Based Licensed Centers:** early learning programs that are *not* publicly funded (i.e., public pre-kindergarten or Head Start). These programs can include nonprofit stand-alone centers and nonprofit centers affiliated with a larger social service agency, hospital, or college. It can also include for-profit stand-alone programs or chains.

**Director:** a staff person who works in a licensed program and who is in charge of the administration of an early learning program. Within the context of this study, directors may be owners of centers, they may be middle management within a larger agency, or they may serve as an executive director for their organization.

**Early Care and Education (ECE):** a broad term used to refer to the suite of programs, including pre-kindergarten, preschool program, child care centers, infant and toddler programs, Head Start, Early Head Start, and licensed family child care homes, that provide early learning and child care to children birth to age five.

**Early Educator:** a broad term used to describe the workforce as a whole, including directors, assistant directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and family child care providers.

**Family Child Care Provider:** a small business owner who operates a licensed home-based early learning program from his or her home. For the purpose of this study, this term includes family homes and group homes.

**Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP):** The State of Michigan's publicly funded pre-kindergarten program for eligible four-year olds.

**Great Start to Quality:** Michigan's quality rating and improvement system.

**Head Start / Early Head Start:** a federally funded ECE program with wraparound services offered to children from low-income families. Head Start serves preschool-aged children; Early Head Start serves infants and toddlers.

**Infant/Toddler Teacher:** a teacher who works in a classroom that serves children birth to age three.

**Michigan Early Childhood Registry (MiRegistry)**: a registry for early child educators used to track employment, education, and training history and to find relevant training opportunities.

**Michigan's Child Development and Care Program:** a tuition subsidy funded through federal Child Development Block Grant dollars to Michigan's Department of Education to help eligible families pay for child care.

**Preschool Teacher**: a teacher who works in a classroom that serves children three to five years of age.

**Public School Administrator:** a staff person with administrative responsibilities in a public school setting. For the purposes of this study, this job role can include pre-kindergarten administrators or coordinators who may supervisor ECE classrooms in one school or in multiple schools within a district. This job role can also include principals who supervise pre-kindergarten and elementary school teachers.

**Publicly Funded Program:** early learning programs that receive at least some public funding. In the current study, this term includes Head Start / Early Head Start, Great Start Readiness Program, and/or programs in public schools.

**T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Michigan Scholarship Program**: T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® is a scholarship program funded by the Michigan Department of Education in which early educators receive tuition support and a retention bonus paid by their ECE program after coursework completion and job requirements have been met.

**Teacher**: a staff person in a licensed center or publicly funded program who is in charge of a classroom. Teachers may be referred to as lead leaders, head teachers, or co-teachers.

# Appendix B

## Profile of Interviewees

| Pseudonym | Job Role | Setting | Education | Length of time in ECE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kendra | Director | Center | Bachelor's in Education / Minor in ECE & SE | 11 years |
| Carla | Teacher | Center | Bachelor's in Early Childhood / Master's in Education | 9 years |
| Talia | Teacher | Center | Bachelor's in Elementary Ed/ Master's in ECE | 8 years |
| Audrey | Assistant Teacher | Center | Associate's in Early Childhood Education | 2 years |
| Melinda | Floater | Center | Bachelor's in Curriculum & Children's Communication | 15 years |
| Kristina | Director | Center | Master's in Early Childhood | 14 years |
| Trisha | Assistant Teacher | Center | Associate's in progress | 4 years |
| Anna | Assistant Teacher | Center | Bachelor's in Social Work | 18 years |
| Sallie | FCC | Family Child | Associate's in Early Childhood | 22 years |
| Karen | FCC | Family Child | No formal education | 18 years |
| Kerstin | FCC | Family Child | Associate's in Early Childhood | 27 years |
| Diana | FCC | Family Child | Associate's in Science & Arts | 20 years |

| Abigail | Teacher | Family Child | Master's in Human Development & Family Studies | 10 years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Myra | FCC | Family Child | Bachelor's in Early Childhood | 9 years |
| Christine | FCC | Family Child | No formal education | 30 years |
| Meredith | FCC | Group Home | Master's in Human Development | 24 years |
| Romaine | FCC | Group Home | Bachelor's in Elementary Education | 25 years |
| Megan | Director | Group Home | Associate's in Child Development | 19 years |
| Brenda | FCC | Group Home | Associate's in Early Childhood / Bachelor's in Family Studies Communication & Psychology | 38 years |

# Appendix C

## Interview Protocol – Michigan ECE Workforce Study

a. Who makes up the early childhood education and care workforce?

b. What are the qualifications (educational/formal) of the workforce? What are the pathways and pipelines into and through the workforce?

c. What support does the early childhood education and care workforce receive and need?

d. What are the professional development needs of the workforce?

# GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

# Interview Questions

1. What is your job title?
    a. How would you describe your job to someone outside of the education field?
    b. (If direct service provider/teacher) What age group do you primarily work with?
    c. How long have you been in this position?


2. Why did you choose to become a [job title]?


3. Let's discuss how you got into this kind of work. Can you start by telling me about your first job in the early childhood field?


    a. Did you transition into early childhood from a different field?

    For each job, as needed, ask:
    b. Why did you pursue this job?
    c. What qualifications did you need?

→ What jobs have followed?

4. Now let's talk about your formal education, specifically any college or university courses, CDA or teaching certificates, or degrees that you have completed.
    a. Have you taken college coursework?
        i. If yes, take me through your educational career, starting with the first classes, certificate, or degree until now.
    → What, if any, degrees or certificates followed?

    b. Why did you pursue this [degree, certificate, or coursework]?
        i. If they did not complete the degree: Why did you not complete the degree or certificate?
    c. To what extent has your education prepared you for your current work?
    d. (If attained while working in ECE) Has it impacted your compensation (pay or benefits)?
    e. Do you have any future educational plans?
    f. What supports, if any, have allowed you to advance your education?
        i. Probe: scholarship opportunities; paid time off; supportive colleagues
    g. What barriers, if any, have you experienced in advancing your education?
        i. Probe: cost; lack of paid time off/sub time; distance to college/university

5. Let's move to non-college credit training and professional development. Do you engage in any professional development?
    a. If so, what kind of professional development and how often?
    b. If not, do you wish you had more opportunities for professional development?

6. What types of professional development opportunities would be most beneficial to you in your role as [job title]?
    a. What content would be most helpful?
    b. What delivery method would be most beneficial?
        i. Probe: one-day workshop, ongoing coaching, conferences
    c. What types of supports would help you engage in the PD you just described?

7. Do you have a supervisor or mentor who provides ongoing support to you in your role as [job title]? (e.g., regular supervision or coaching.)
    a. If no, where do you go for support and resources related to your work?
        i. Probe: organizations, networks, or peer groups
    b. If yes, tell me what supervision or mentoring typically looks like for you.
        i. Probe: is your supervisor/mentor someone within your organization?
        ii. How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor or mentor?
        iii. How often do you meet?
        iv. What do you discuss during your meetings?
        v. Are there any other organizations, networks, or peer groups you go to for support and resources related to your work?

      c.   If you could, what would you change about the kind of support you receive?
          i.   When do you feel most supported?

8.   Do you regularly supervise other staff?
      a.   If yes, how many individuals do you supervise?
      b.   What does this supervision look like?
          i.   Probe: process, content, time

9.   What do you find most rewarding about your job?

10.  What do you find most frustrating or challenging about your job?

11.  If you could change one or two things about your job, what would they be?

12.  Approximately how long do you plan to stay at your current job?
      a.   If applicable, what motivates you to stay?
      b.   If a desire to leave is expressed:
          i.   Where would you like to work? What would need to change in order for you to stay?
         ii.   Probe: intent to stay in the ECE field

13.  What are your professional goals?
      a.   What job would you like to have 10 years from now?